Alabama Chess Antics

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Winter 2021

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A scene from the 2020 Dothan Open (which took place in early 2021!) at the Mural City Coffee Company. OTB chess fights on amid the pandemic.

Photo submitted by TD Caesar Lawrence.

Greetings from the Editor

Howdy, folks! As OTB tournament chess slowly creeps out of its hidey-hole, the *Antics* is starting to feature more annotations of recent, regular rated games—just like "the good ol' days."

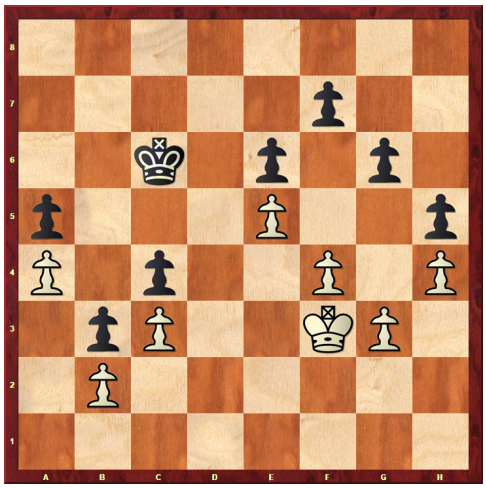
In this issue, **NM Stephen Adams** (Alabama's 2014 State Champion, and a many-time Alabama Scholastic state champion) annotates his recent win against IM Ron Burnett.

Meanwhile, the rising **Aaron DeCord** has annotated his big win from the final round of the 2021 Queen of Hearts. Not only did this win give him shared first place, but also, it won him the *Antics* magazine's "Game of the Quarter" award for Winter 2021.

TD Caesar Lawrence provides his account of the Dothan Open and the Queen of Hearts. (By the way, the unforgettable photo of Dothan Open Reserve Champion Shawn Choi with Caesar Lawrence on page 3 has won our "Photo of the Quarter" award.) It is worth noting that, thanks to Caesar's diligence, the long-running annual tradition of the Queen of Hearts has continued for yet another year—in spite of the pandemic. What can one say? Caesar, you deserve a medal!

For those who have not ventured back into OTB tournament territory just yet, there are still opportunities for serious online competition. To be specific: we have the **Alabama Online Grand Prix** tournament series. I give a summary of the progress of this series of exciting tournaments thus far.

Last, but not least, perennial *Antics* contributor **Doug Strout** annotates an online blitz game against an NM. Of particular interest is the king and pawn ending seen in the diagram here. Could White have won? Read the article to find out…



Strout-Scalzo: White to play.

As always, please submit your chess content to the *Antics* editor (at Alabama.Chess.Editor@gmail.com) so that, together, we can tell the story of chess in Alabama.

Sincerely,
-Scott Varagona

ACF Membership

Any individual may become a **Regular Member** upon the payment of annual dues of **$15.00**. Regular members may enter ACF tournaments and receive special publications or notices from ACF as they are issued. Any chess club seeking to become an **Affiliate** is required to file the Affiliate Information Form with the Secretary of the ACF and pay annual dues of **$35.00**. Benefits of becoming an affiliate include the right to bid to host ACF-sanctioned events, such as the Alabama State Championship, and to receive advertising through the ACF for your tournaments.

2020 Dothan Open

by Caesar Lawrence

We had 21 players at the Dothan Open on January 9, 2021.

Premier Section Champion:
Sanjay Kumar (GA), 3.0 points

Reserve Section Champion:
Shawn Choi, 3.5 points

Top left: 2020 Dothan Open Premier Section winner, Sanjay Kumar.

Above: Shawn Choi, Reserve Section winner, with TD Caesar Lawrence.

Left: a scene from the Dothan Open at the Mural City Coffee Company.

(Photos submitted to the Antics by Caesar Lawrence.) ■

Burnett-Adams

by Stephen Adams

Ron Burnett – Stephen Adams
(2400) (2232)
January Super Tornado (Indianapolis)
Round 4; January 17, 2021

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 b6 3.g3 Bb7 4.Bg2 g6 5.0-0 Bg7 6.c4 0-0

I opt for a solid position free of weaknesses. This double fianchetto is a sort of "modern" approach. White will gain a space advantage while Black can aim to collapse the structure with a timely pawn break later.

7.Re1

White begins fighting for the e4-square. The most common move in this position, 7.Nc3, is met by 7…Ne4 whereupon Black initiates minor piece trades to alleviate the space disadvantage.

7…e6 8.Bf4 d6

Again, I hold back on an immediate break. We can see the flexibility in the Black position: …e5, …d5, and …c5 are all plausible pawn breaks in the future that both players must keep an eye on.

9.Qd3

Throwing down the gauntlet and intending e4 next.

9…Nc6

Preparing a counterpunch. If White plays e4, I will meet it with …e5.

The choice of Stockfish, 9…c5, is the most challenging option. In the game, I was concerned about weakening the d6-square by pushing

my c-pawn. Note that White cannot alleviate the pressure by trading pawns because Black meets 10.dxc5 with 10...e5! winning material due to the fork on e4.

The variation that made me hesitate was 10.Rd1 cxd4 11.Qxd4.

(Analysis diagram)

Now, I can't play the fork with 11…e5 due to 12.Nxe5! taking advantage of the pin. I could win the bishop pair with 11…Nd5 12.Qd2 Nxf4 13.gxf4 where Black has an active position but also a weak d6-pawn.

10.Nc3

If my opponent grabbed the center with 10. e4, I was intending to strike back with 10…e5! 11.dxe5 Nh5!

(Analysis diagram)

I am regaining the e5-pawn with a promising position.

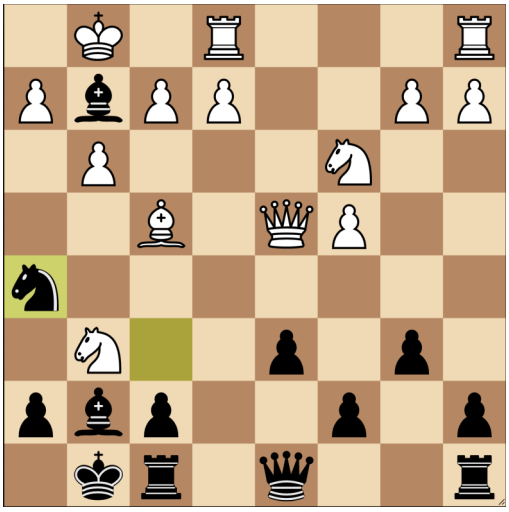
10...Nxd4!?

The center fork trick! I spent a long time on this move and the previous move calculating the ramifications of this ploy and figured

that I wouldn't be worse.

11.Nxd4

11.Qxd4 is of course White's other main option. After 11…e5 12.Nxe5 Bxg2, White can attempt to win a pawn with the desperado 13.Nxg6. However, I had planned a counter intermediate move of 13…Nh5! with an absolute mess!



(Analysis diagram)

White has to find a square for the queen. 14.Qe3 is hit with tempo by 14...Re8, and 14.Qd2 is met by 14…fxg6 15.Kxg2 Nxf4+ 16.gxf4 Bxc3 17.Qxc3, whereupon White's pawns are shattered.

(Analysis diagram)

11…Bxg2 12.Kxg2 e5 13.Nc6?!

White could still preserve a small edge keeping the bishop with 13.Be3 exd4 14.Bxd4. White can play a Maroczy structure with pawns on c4 and e4, but with two minor piece exchanges already, the space disadvantage shouldn't be a big problem.

13…Qe8 14.Nb4?

Finally, my opponent makes a tangible concession. White could still save the bishop with a retreat after 14.Nxe5 dxe5. The move played in the game not only cedes the bishop but also allows White's pawn structure to be broken.

14…exf4 15.gxf4 Nh5

Threatening a nasty fork on f4.

16.e3 Qd7

Threatening an infiltration into White's weakened light squares.

17.h3

Now we reach the critical strategic moment of the game. I felt like I *should* be better. Yet, White still has a lot to play for. A strong knight anchored on d5 would greatly hinder my chances to push my opponent around, and the …c6 push to kick the knight out is virtually unplayable due to the weakness it would create to the d6-pawn.

The top five Stockfish moves don't appear to be of any help either:

-0.2	17... a5 18. ♘c2 ♕c6+ 19. ♕d5 ♕c5 20. ♕d3 ♖fe8 21. ♖g1 ♖...
-0.1	17... ♖fd8 18. ♖ed1 c6 19. ♘c2 ♕b7 20. ♘d4 ♘f6 21. ♘f3 d5...
-0.1	17... ♖ad8 18. ♖ed1 ♖fe8 19. ♘c2 ♘f6 20. ♘d4 c6 21. ♘f3 ♕...
-0.1	17... c6 18. ♖ed1 ♖ad8 19. ♘c2 a6 20. a4 ♕b7 21. ♘d4 ♘f6 ...
-0.1	17... ♖fe8 18. ♖ed1 ♖ad8 19. ♘c2 ♗xc3 20. ♕xc3 c5 21. ♘e...

There's not a clear way Black should proceed, so I make a very subtle move with the human touch.

17...Rab8!

My favorite move of the game. In the short term, I can kick the b4-knight with …a5 since Nd5 can be met with ...c6 trapping the knight. In the long term, my plan is to trade on c3 at a favorable time and play …b5 to open

the queenside.

18.Nc2 Bxc3!

With a follow-up of a queen check on c6, this is a great time to initiate the trade.

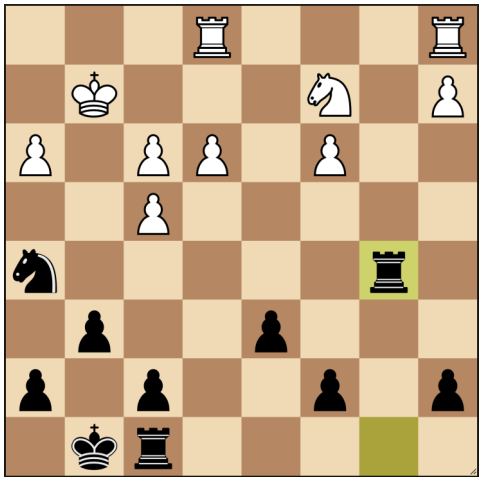
19.Qxc3 Qc6+ 20.f3?

Weakening the second rank, the e3-pawn, and the g3-square all at once. White had to sidestep with Kh2 and allow a future infiltration with …Qf3 as this pawn move is too reckless.

20…a5

A prophylactic move. The only source of counterplay for my opponent would have been Nb4-d5.

There was nothing wrong with the immediate 20…b5 entering a superior endgame after 21.cxb5 Qxc3 22.bxc3 Rxb5.



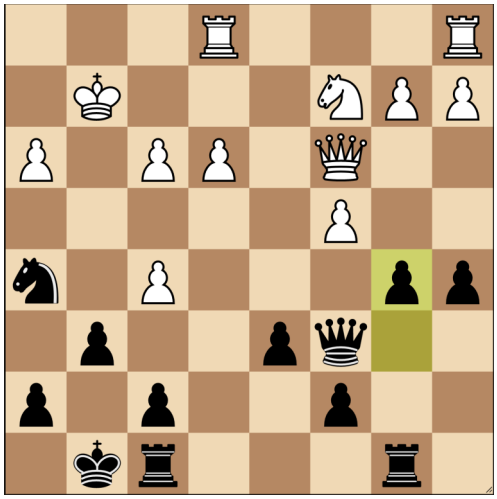
(Analysis diagram)

With control over the b-file, Black has excellent chances. However, my opponent was getting low on time by this point, so I wanted to play with the queens on the board for a bit longer.

21.f5?

If anything, this move makes the …b5 break even stronger. During the game, I thought shutting down the break with 21.a4 was necessary.

21…b5!

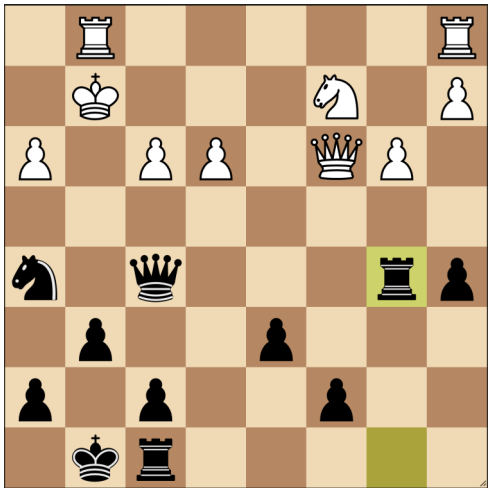


White's position collapses.

22.cxb5 Qxb5 23.b3 Qxf5

It's always great to have the extra pawn and the compensation!

24.Rg1 Rb5!



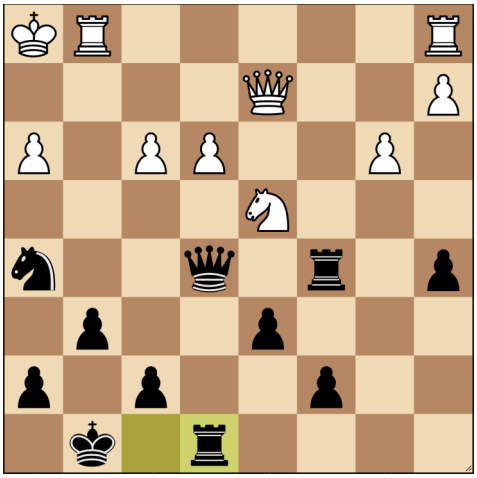
Activating the rook. White faces serious threats due to their weak king and …Rc5.

25.Nd4 Rc5

While I decided against the endgame back on move 20, I would have no hesitation about entering this one.

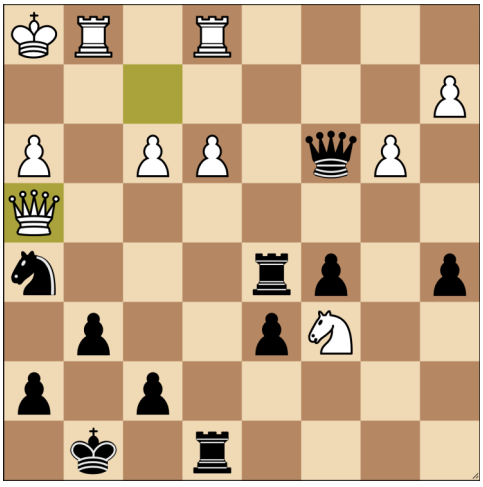
26.Qd2 Qg5+ 27.Kh2 Qe5+ 28.Kh1 Re8

Bringing the last piece into the game.



Black is winning in every way: material, king safety, piece activity, and pawn structure.

29.Rae1 Rd5 30.Qf2 c5 31.Nc6 Qc3 32.Qh4



White attempts to stir up some counterplay based on Ne7+ and a potential Qxh5. The next move sidesteps all of White's threats.

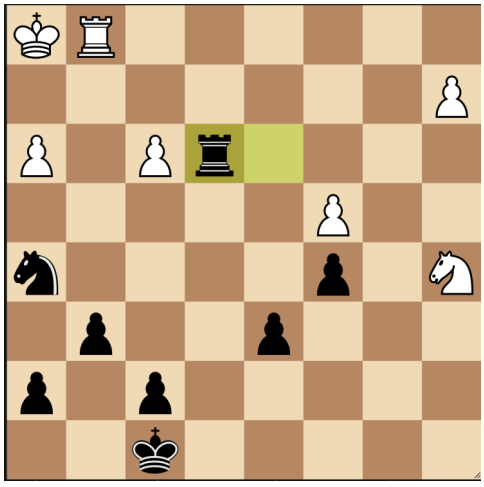
32…Kf8

There was a more direct win with 32…Rd2! 33.Qxh5 Qc2! and White is getting mated. However, we were in mutual time pressure and I didn't want to take any chances.

33.Qc4

Against unbearable pressure, my opponent had no choice but to enter a lost endgame.

33…Qxc4 34.bxc4 Rd3 35.Nxa5 Rexe3 36.Rxe3 Rxe3



We had both stopped notating a while back due to time pressure. In the end, I was able to corral his remaining weak pawns and win. **0-1** ■

NM Stephen Adams in Indianapolis, getting ready to play a brilliancy and collect an IM scalp—and with Black, no less! Congratulations to Stephen on a job well done.

49th Annual Queen of Hearts

by Caesar Lawrence

The **Queen of Hearts** celebrated the 49th year of chess competition on February 20-21, 2021. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, we had 49 players to participate from eleven (11) states. And, yes, we did wear face masks!

The Premier Champions are **NM Alexander Rutten** of Alpharetta, GA, **Aaron DeCord** of Alabaster, AL, and **Miles Melvin** of Huntsville, AL. They each scored four (4) out of five (5) points to share the first-place honors. Alexander won the QoH Premier Champion Trophy on tiebreaks.

The Reserve Champion is **Kendall Franks** of Tuscaloosa, AL. He scored 4.5/5 points to secure the first-place honors.

We are grateful to the **AUM** School of Science - Division of Continuing Education, Dr. Rhodes Peele (Associate Professor for Mathematics), and Dr. Mariano Runco (Associate Professor for Economics) for helping us keep the Queen of Hearts tradition going over the past 40+ years.

This year we held the Queen of Hearts at Montgomery's HGI-Eastchase hotel. The Shoppes at Eastchase is a very convenient and accommodating location – food, lodging and shopping all within 2 square miles. "Thanks" to Stacy Calhoun (HGI Sales Manager). She made it happen!

2021 Queen of Hearts Winners

Premier (Rating 1600+):

1st: **NM Alexander Rutten** – 4 points
Aaron DeCord – 4 points
Miles Melvin – 4 points.

Reserve (Rating U1600):

1st: **Kendall Franks** – 4.5 points. ■

Top: Aaron DeCord and Alexander Rutten. (It seems they are about to be drawn into some kind of vortex?!) Bottom right: Reserve Champion Kendall Franks.

Game of the Quarter:

Must-Win Game from the Queen of Hearts

by Aaron DeCord

Going into the final round of the 2021 Queen of Hearts, my talented young opponent, Alex Rutten, was the only player with a perfect 4/4. There were several players with 3/4, including myself, Miles Melvin (1973), Isaac Snow (2013), and Drew Justice (2030). That made this a must-win game if I wanted to tie for first in the tournament. I was feeling reasonably confident about my chances despite being 100 points lower rated because, up to this point, I had a surprisingly good score of 2.5/3 against Alex.

I was expecting a Benoni from my opponent, which was exactly what I wanted to see given the tournament situation. However, Alex surprised me with the Classical Slav, but he did choose one of the more aggressive variations, which I was happy about.

Aaron DeCord - Alexander Rutten
(2102) (2211)
Queen of Hearts (Montgomery, AL)
Round 5; February 21, 2021

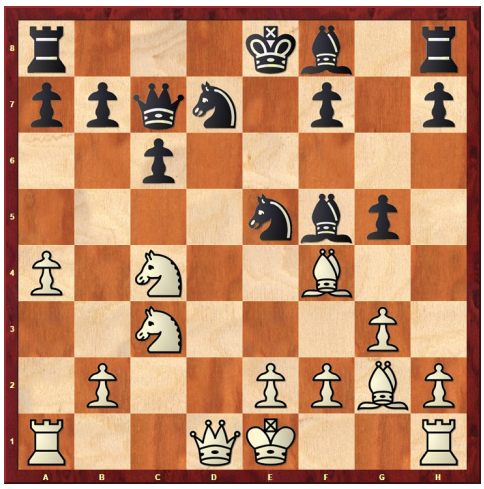
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 dxc4 5.a4 Bf5 6.Ne5

I prefer this move to the main line with 6.e3 because it seems harder for black to equalize and the resulting positions are usually sharper.

6...Nbd7 7.Nxc4 Qc7 8.g3 e5 9.dxe5 Nxe5 10.Bf4 Nfd7 11.Bg2

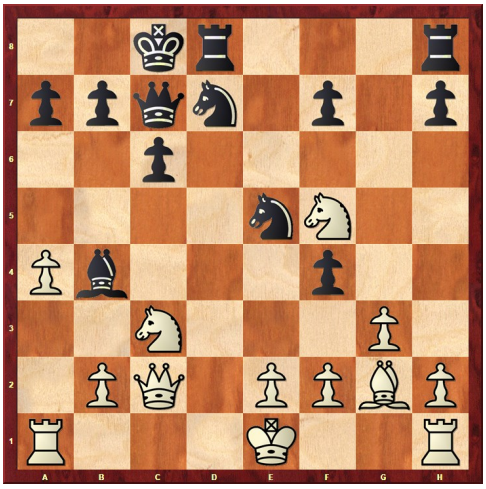
I thought I was out of book after this move but then he played...

11...g5



…and I remembered having seen this before, but I had never faced it over the board. I've always thought this line was slightly dubious since it weakens a lot of squares. However, black does usually get good attacking chances.

12.Ne3 gxf4 13.Nxf5 0–0–0 14.Qc2 Bb4



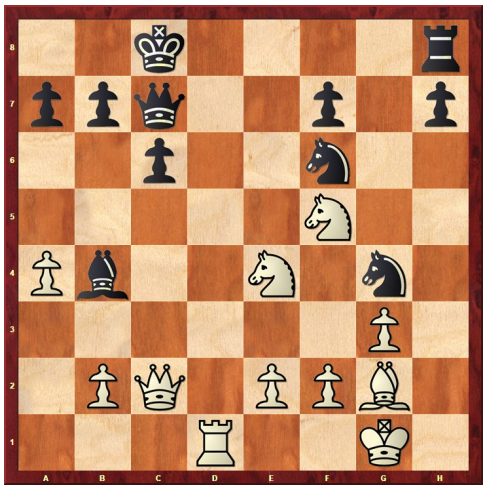
15.Rd1

This might seem a little strange instead of 15.0–0, but I was concerned about 15.0–0 fxg3 16.hxg3 h5 with a quick attack, so I tried to make him "blink first" by taking on g3 which would open the h-file for my rook.

15...Nf6

Of course he didn't oblige.

16.0–0 fxg3 17.hxg3 Rxd1 18.Rxd1 Neg4 19.Ne4



19…a5

I was threatening Qc4 followed by Nd6+ winning the f7-pawn, so he defends the bishop so that Qc4 won't come with tempo.

20.Nxf6 Nxf6 21.Nh6?

I knew this probably wasn't the best move, but I wanted to force him to either give up the f7-pawn or go into passivity to defend it. There's also an immediate threat of Qf5+ winning the knight. White is still much better, but correct would have been 21.Nd4!, where it's better placed after 21...Kb8 22.Qf5. Black can't play 22...Qe7?! because of 23.Bxc6!, and if 22...Ne8 then white (still) has the almost impossible-to-find computer move 23.Bxc6!! and gets a big attack. Needless to say, I didn't see all of that during the game.

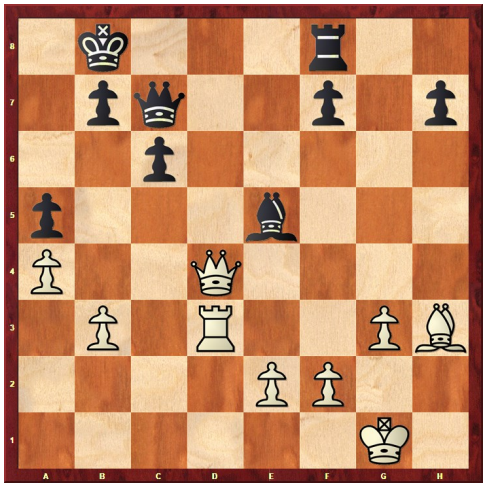
21...Kb8 22.Qc4 Rf8 23.b3

Shoring up my structure against distant ideas like Nd7 to b6.

23...Ng8 24.Nxg8

If 24.Nf5 he just plays 24...Ne7 and I still can't avoid the trade, so I might as well make him waste a tempo with the rook, so I thought.

24...Rxg8 25.Bh3 Bd6 26.Rd3 Rf8 27.Qd4 Be5?



This move shocked me at first because I thought I was winning material after...

28.Qc5

...hitting the rook and threatening the devastating Rd7, but my opponent quickly played:

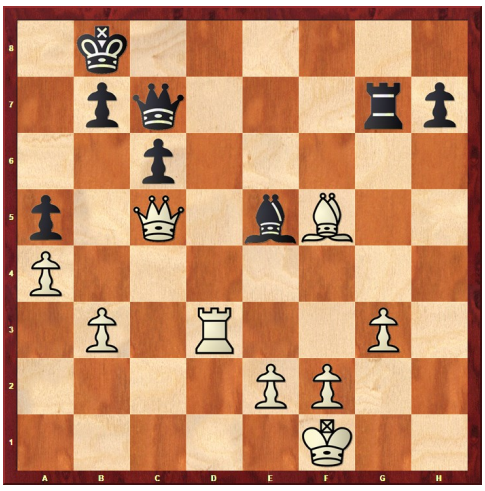
28...Rg8

I realized that if I played 29.Rd7 he had a nice shot with 29...Bxg3! and if 30.Rxc7 then 30...Bd6+ wins back the queen. So I thought for a while here and decided that the best thing to do was renew the threat of Rd7 by moving my king out of the way.

29.Kf1 f5?!

Sacking a pawn to defend the 7th rank, but now he is down a pawn with no compensation. The computer's recommendation 29...Bxg3 isn't much better though.

30.Bxf5 Rg7



I thought for some 15 minutes here because I wasn't quite sure how to

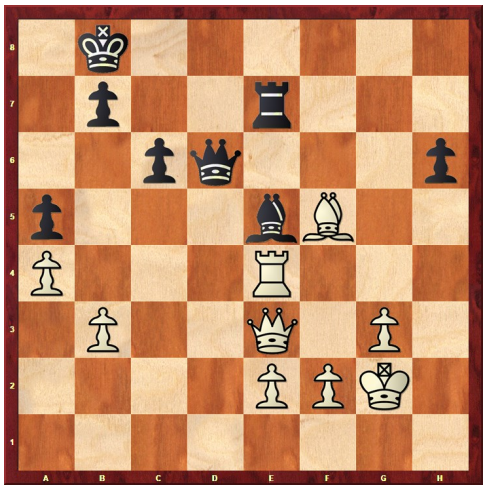
improve the position. Qf8+ Ka7 Rd8 didn't seem to lead to anything, since his king will actually be pretty safe on b6 if it has to go there. So I knew that I couldn't break through on the dark squares, and pushing pawns around my king seemed too risky with queens still on the board. So I thought my best chance to win this position was to trade queens, and the only way I saw to force a queen trade involved trading rooks as well. The resulting ending leaves opposite-colored bishops, which seems counterintuitive to go for, but I thought that my two connected passers, coupled with his weak h7-pawn, would give me good chances of winning that ending. So…

31.Re3

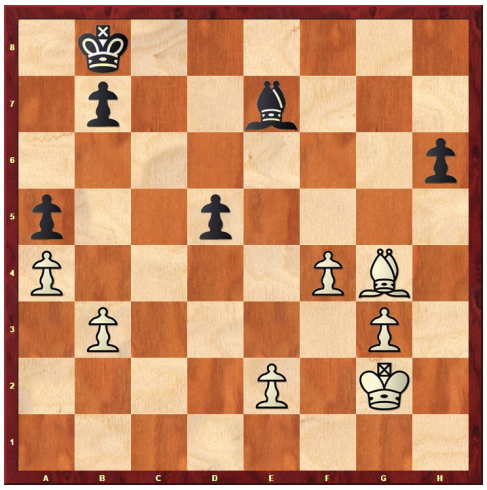
Forcing Re7, and eventually all the heavy pieces will inevitably come off the board. However, the fearless computer points out that 31.f4 was in fact possible and the best move, but that just looked way too risky and unnecessary to me.

31...Re7 32.Re4 h6 33.Qe3 Qd6 34.Kg2

Preparing for the endgame by bringing my king one step closer.

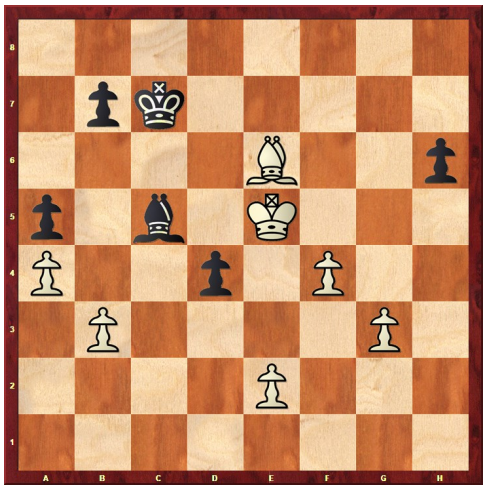


34...Qf6 35.Bg4 Qd6 36.f4 Bf6 37.Rxe7 Bxe7 38.Qe6 Qd5+ 39.Qxd5 cxd5



40.Be6 d4 41.Kf3 Kc7 42.Ke4 Bc5 43.Ke5!

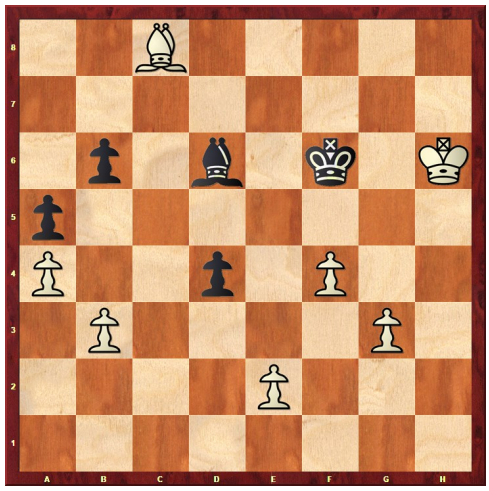
Stopping his king from going to d6.



43...Kd8 44.Kf6 Bf8 45.Kf7 Bd6 46.Bg4

Stopping h5-h4, which wasn't a huge threat, but I was low on time and just wanted to keep the structure together.

46...b6 47.Kg7 Ke7 48.Kxh6 Kf6 49.Bc8



Here I stopped taking notation, but I eventually won this ending by bringing my king behind the pawns and pushing them in unison, always keeping at least one on a dark square.
1–0

With this win, I tied for first in one of the legendary Alabama tournaments. ■

Alabama Online Grand Prix: Events 1-3

by Scott Varagona

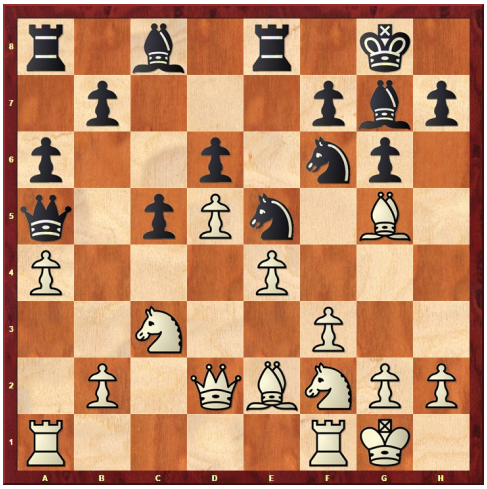
To give Alabama chess players more opportunities to compete during the pandemic in 2021, the ACF announced the "Alabama Online Grand Prix"—a series of six monthly, five-round swiss-system tournaments on chess.com. Each event in this series would have Premier, Challenger (U1800), and Adepts (U1200) sections with prizes for 1st and 2nd place as well as some class prizes. More importantly, competitors would earn GP points from each tournament based on performance, and the players with the most points from their five best qualifier events would be seeded into a grand final: the Invitational Championship in July.

This report very briefly summarizes the results from the Premier section of the first three monthly events (in January, February, and March) and gives a few highlights. For complete results across all sections, as well as the rules of the Grand Prix series, see alabamachess.org.

Grand Prix Tournament 1
January 23, 2021

This first tournament's Premier Section drew 14 players. In the end, I took first place with 5/5 followed by Jeffrey Byrd and Om Badhe with 3.5/5, with Jeffrey taking second place on tiebreaks.

Jonathan Rasberry and Faruk Esat Ergin were also in contention near the end. They played out a long bishop endgame in round 4; although the position had looked promising, Jonathan pressed too hard and ended up losing. Mr. Ergin had won, but that game was so hectic that it must have been difficult to calm down and readjust for his round 5 game against me—a game which he was instantly thrown into! This explains why he suffered an opening slip-up:



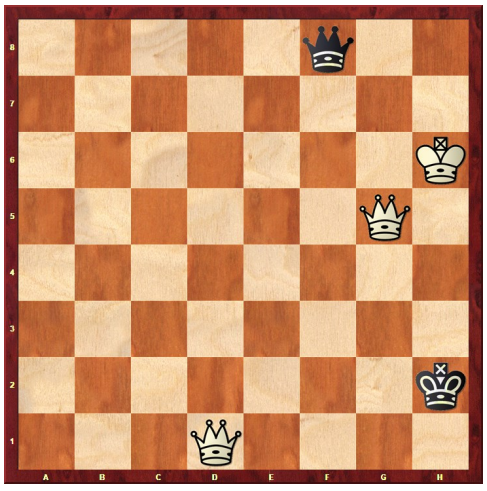
Varagona – Ergin
Black to Play.

14…Bd7?? seems like a natural move, but there is a trap: **15.Bxf6! Bxf6 16.f4**, and suddenly the knight is caught right in the center of the board. (White soon won.) This is an instructive idea to remember, as this sort of trap arises in various Benoni or King's Indian positions.

Grand Prix Tournament 2
February 13, 2021

After his misfortune in the first tournament, Ergin struck back in this one to tie for first (at 4.5/5 points), taking first on tiebreaks. I also finished with 4.5 points, and Bill Melvin got third place with 3.5 points in the 15-player field.

The finale of the game between Bill Melvin and Jonathan Rasberry caused quite a sensation:



B. Melvin – Rasberry
White to play.

Both 80.Kg6! and 80.Qg7! were correct, according to the computer. Instead, **80.Kh5??** gave Jonathan a once-in-a-lifetime chance: **80…Qf3+!!** Surprise—out of the blue, there is a stalemate trap. Of course, 81.Qxf3 is an immediate draw, so: **81.Qg4 Qf7+ 82.Kg5 Qf6+! 83.Kh5 Qh6+ 84.Kxh6 stalemate (1/2-1/2)**.

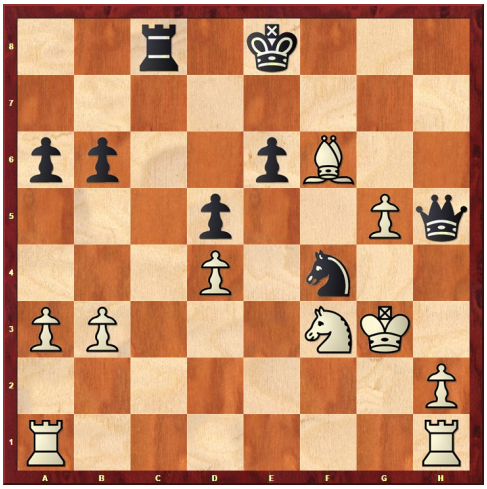
Grand Prix Tournament 3
March 20, 2021

In a fierce tournament where no one escaped unscathed, Miles Melvin and I ultimately tied for first at 4/5 points, with me taking first place on tiebreaks. Thus, I was leading the Grand Prix series at the halfway mark, with 27 total GP points.

The most memorable game I witnessed in this third event had to be:

Yuri Barnakov - Tom Denton
(Round 5)

1.e4 b6 2.d4 Bb7 3.f3 e6 4.Be3 d5 5.e5 Ne7 6.g4 h5 7.c3 hxg4 8.fxg4 Ng6 9.Nf3 Be7 10.Kd2 c5 11.Bb5+ Bc6 12.Qa4 Qd7 13.Na3 a6 14.Bxc6 Nxc6 15.Qd1 cxd4 16.cxd4 Na5 17.Ke2 Bxa3 18.bxa3 Nc4 19.Qb3 Rh3 20.Bg5 f6 21.exf6 gxf6 22.Bxf6 Nf4+ 23.Kf2 Nd2 24.Nxd2 Rxb3 25.axb3 Qf7 26.g5 Qh5 27.Nf3 Rc8 28.Kg3



Barnakov – T. Denton
Black to play.

Tom Denton's choice of Owen's Defense had led to an unusual middlegame; now, with his last remaining pieces, Tom mounted a successful attack against White's exposed king: **28...Ne2+ 29.Kf2 Rc2 30.Rhf1 Qg4** Closing in on the quarry. **31.Ne1 Nxd4+ 32.Nxc2 Qf3+ 33.Ke1 Qe2# 0–1.**

It had been a wild battle filled with many tactics and imbalances; as Yuri Barnakov said after the game, "Tal is watching us."

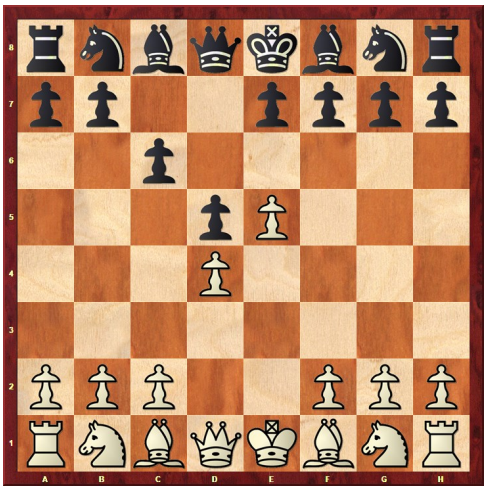
We are grateful to Jonathan Rasberry, Michael Porcelli, and all the other ACF officials/volunteers who have made this Grand Prix series possible. Stay tuned for a report on the next events in the series in a future *Antics*. ■

Strout-Scalzo

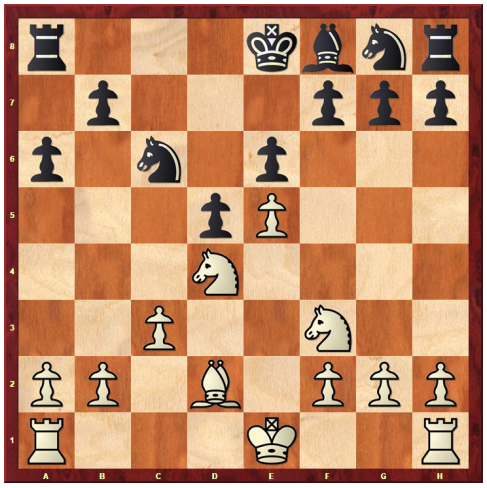
by Doug Strout

Doug Strout - NM Antonio Scalzo
(1492) (1828)
Chess.com; January 4, 2021

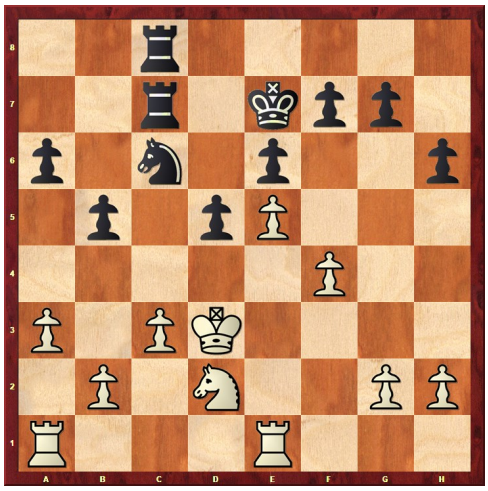
This is a game of online USCF blitz on chess.com. Time control is Game/10. Opponent is National Master Antonio Scalzo of Pennsylvania. Ratings are the USCF Online Blitz ratings for both players. **1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5**



I've been trying to work out the Caro-Kann Advance in hopes of being able to get better results than the Caro Exchange (3.exd5 cxd5).* **3...Bf5 4.Bd3 Bxd3 5.Qxd3** I played the Caro Advance, but my basic premise for playing the game is still confrontation and tradeoff. First up, making the light-square bishops go away. **5...e6 6.Nf3 Qa5+ 7.Qd2 Qxd2+ 8.Bxd2** Continuation of the theme, with development of the dark square bishop. **8...c5 9.c3 Nc6 10.Na3 a6 11.Nc2 cxd4 12.Ncxd4**



Would cxd4 have been better here? The original c3 push was to preserve the d4 -e5 pawn chain. Now I've given it up. **12...Nge7 13.Nxc6 Nxc6 14.0–0 Bc5 15.Rfe1 0–0 16.Be3 Bxe3 17.Rxe3** Confrontation and liquidation of the dark-square bishops. I feel like I am getting the game I want. **17...Rfc8 18.Ree1 h6 19.Kf1 b5 20.a3 Kf8 21.Ke2 Ke7 22.Kd3 Rc7 23.Nd2 Rac8 24.f4**



Pushing f4 means I don't have to use pieces to babysit e5. **24...g6 25.g3 Na5** Not too worried about the knight, since I am already holding b3 and c4 with mine. **26.Rac1 Nc4 27.Nxc4 dxc4+** Should ...bxc4 have been played here? That would have left me with a bad pawn on b2, which is exactly the sort of problem I get into when I play the Caro Exchange. **28.Kc2 Rd7 29.Rcd1**

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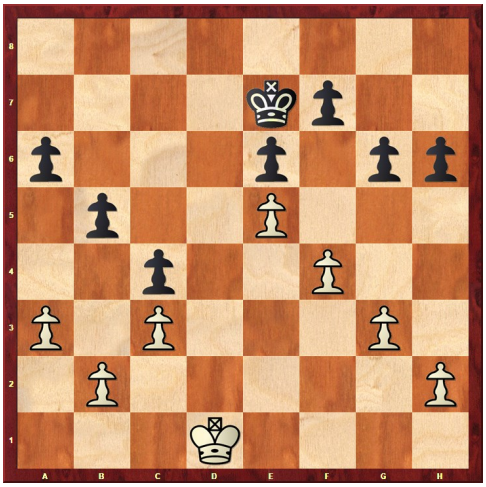
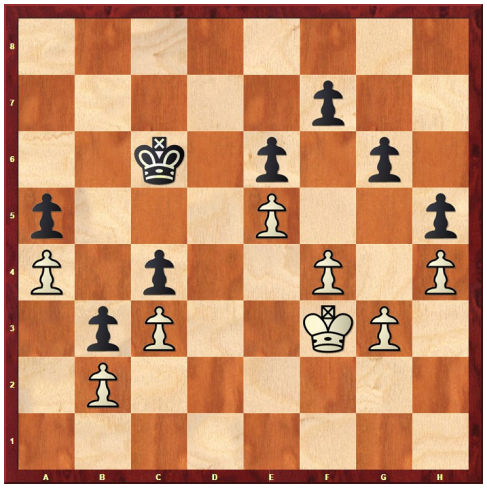
* *As a Caro-Kann player, it is interesting to watch different trends come and go at the state level. In the 2000s, most people played the Advance Variation; in the 2010s, I was constantly seeing the Classical Main Line (3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4); more recently, there has been a mixture of the Panov-Botvinnik (3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4) and the Advance Variation. Which line do I think is "objectively best" for White?... That is a secret I will probably take to my grave! -Ed*

Definitely getting the game I want now. Release the kraken! **29...Rcd8 30.Rxd7+ Rxd7 31.Rd1 Rxd1 32.Kxd1**



Let's go to work. **32...Kd7 33.Ke2 Kc6 34.Ke3 Kd5** e4 is a square I cannot let him have. **35.Kf3 a5 36.Ke3 h5 37.h4** I'm looking to draw here and trying to play drawish moves. **37...Kc5 38.Ke4** I gain a little space here, but what do I do with it but hold the center? **38...b4** He wants to swap off so his king can occupy b4, but I don't want that, so... **39.a4** ...I do this to lock up the queenside. **39...b3 40.Kf3 Kc6**



41.Ke4 This move feels right. In a pawn ending the king should be stepping forward and occupying space, right? Computer analysis, however, says I am making a mistake. Apparently, I should have played Kf2, which leads to an elaborate dance that wins the c4 pawn.** I just didn't see it. **41...Kc5 42.Kf3 Kc6 43.Ke4** My second swing-and-miss, where I should have played Kf2. Could've beaten the NM, but I still feel good about the game. **43...Kc5 ½–½** ■

** *And here is the dance choreography: after 41.Kf2!, Black cannot play 41…Kd5? since 42.Ke3 Kc5 43.Ke4 Kc6 44.Kd4 wins easily for White. Instead, Black tries 41…Kc5, but then 42.Ke2! is a clever triangulation. With 42…Kd5 43.Ke3, White wins the same way as before. On the other hand, with 42…Kc6 43.Kf3! White recreates the position in the diagram, but with Black to move—and that's zugzwang: after 43…Kb6 (hoping for 44.Ke4? Kc5!) 44.Ke3! Kc5 45.Ke4, White finally wins. -Ed*

ALABAMA CHESS ANTICS

Email:

Alabama.Chess.Editor@gmail.com

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Alabama Chess Federation

Upcoming Tournaments

See www.alabamachess.org for updates on these and other events.

May 22	**Alabama Online Grand Prix**	**chess.com**
May 29	**Vulcan Chess Tournament**	**Birmingham, AL**
June 5	**Alabama Quick & Blitz State Ch.**	**Montgomery, AL**
June 19	**Alabama Online Grand Prix**	**chess.com**
June 26	**Clarence Kalenian Classic**	**Dothan, AL**
July 24	**Alabama Dual-Rated State Ch.**	**Montgomery, AL**

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To submit articles, pictures and games to the *Antics*, email the *Antics* editor at

Alabama.Chess.Editor@gmail.com

Games in .pgn format are strongly preferred.

Please contact **jonathan.rasberry@alabamachess.org** if you are interested in helping with the Alabama Chess Federation.

Diagrams on pages 4-10 were contributed by Stephen Adams. All other chess diagrams in this issue were produced using *Fritz*, a program by *ChessBase*.

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